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AUTHOR Enger, John M.: And Others
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ABSTRACT

Of the 255 Arkansas school districts responding to a questionnaire, 67 percent received resource support from the private sector. Contributed services were reported by 48 percent of the districts receiving support, monetary contributions by 46 percent, equipment and supplies by 40 percent, and buildings and land by 6 percent. Corporations provided resource support to 35 percent of the districts, service organizations to 45 percent, and private individuals to 46 percent. Significant relationships were found between three district characteristics (size, assets, and tax effort) and some sources and types of support. Superintendents' perceptions of their districts' needs for contributions from the private sector were also related to the receipt of support, but these needs were felt to a greater degree than they were met. (PGD)

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PRIVATE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

by

John M. Enger, Arkansas State University

Donald E. Wright, Arkansas State University

Alvin L. Futrell, Henderson State University

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PRIVATE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

An Abstract

Each school district in Arkansas was surveyed to determine the extent public education is being supplemented with contributions from the private sector. About two-thirds of the districts reporting, identified receipts of private philanthropy. These contributions were classified as coming from three sources (corporations, service organizations and private individuals) and categorized in four types (monetary, buildings and land, equipment and supplies, and contributed services).

Larger school districts were found to have more contributory activity than smaller school districts. Also, the millage, an indicator of community support of education, and the perceived need expressed by the school district superintendent for these contributions were significant factors in predicting private support of public school education in the form of equipment and supplies and contributed services.

PRIVATE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS

While the cry for quality education is constant and loud, the financial support of education is being curtailed. The federal government has mandated more for public education without adequate funding for these inclusions. The increases in revenue for public schools from local, state and federal agencies have not kept pace with the increased costs of providing instruction. In a period of high inflation, declining enrollments, and studies which question the direct relationship between increased spending and quality education, the money squeeze has come to the public schools.

Aspirations of modernizing administrative services, expanding curricular offerings and reducing pupil/teacher ratios are dampened by the effects of the economic recession. At present, school districts find themselves struggling to maintain present services and curricula as they are confronted with increased costs. To supplement local, state and federal subsidies of public school instruction, educators have sought resources from the private sector.

Sources of Private Support

Private support for public school education may be classified as originating from three sources: (1) corporations, (2) service organizations, and (3) private individuals. Thompson (1979) notes private resource support of public school education has been one of our least tapped resources. Private foundations are generally perceived as

being easier to work with in obtaining grant subsidies than are government agencies (Havighurst, 1978). Roser (1979) addresses the demand for private business and non-profit agencies may take in philanthropic gestures since profit and loss factors affect them differently. Corporate support may come with or without pre conditions (Cabot, 1978; Malott, 1978).

Although most publicized private foundation support comes from large foundations (e.g., the Carnegie, Exxon, Ford and Rockefeller foundations), the existence of other large and numerous smaller foundations may be found in every state (Thompson, 1979). The Bush Foundation in Minnesota, the Danforth Foundation in Missouri, and the Spring Foundation in South Carolina are examples of lesser known foundations that support public education through grants to districts and/or individuals to improve management skills and study educational issues (Thompson, 1979).

Types of Private Support

Contributions to public school education may come in four categories: (1) monetary, (2) buildings and land, (3) equipment and supplies, and (4) contributed services. Exorbitant building costs have brought occurrences of shared facilities, joint occupancy and multiple-use buildings utilized concurrently by public schools, communities and private organizations (Seyfert, 1977; Baas, 1973). Land contributions have also been sought from local developers in an effort to cut educational costs (Brown and Hollander, 1972).

Human resources, outside faculty members, are little used by many school districts, but could be used to conduct a variety of student

activities and in development projects (NASSP, 1971). The services of volunteers as tutors, teacher aides and learning center assistants are examples of utilization of human resources (Goldring, 1972).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which Arkansas public schools have received contributions from the private sector. The school district administrator's perceived need for these contributions was also assessed.

To differentiate between public school districts which receive private support from those which do not, four predictor variables were employed: (1) Size. The size of the district was determined by the number of students enrolled. (2) Assets. The potential for financial support of the district was derived by dividing the total assessed valuation of the school district by the number of students enrolled. The figure generated was representative of the tax base per student educated. (3) Activity. Assuming the patron commitment to education would be in part related to the taxpayers' financial obligation, the millage rate was selected as indicative of community support of education. (4) Expense. The average dollar expenditure per year to educate each student was selected as a measure of the relative expense of education in each school district.

Method

A questionnaire and accompanying cover letter were developed to assess the extent of contributions received by school districts in

Arkansas. Paired combinations of each contributory source (corporations, service organizations, and private individuals) by each contributory type (monetary, buildings and land, equipment and supplies, and contributed services) were incorporated into the questionnaire. Also, school district administrators were asked to rate their perceived need for these various types of contributions from the private sector. Published data from the State Department of Education were recorded for each school district for each of the four additional predictor variables.

Results

Of the 372 questionnaires sent to school district superintendents in Arkansas, 255 were returned, representing a 69 percent response rate. These returns were received within several weeks of the original mailing date with no follow-up procedures conducted.

Overall, 67 percent of those responding indicated their districts get some resource support from the private sector, as reported in Table 1. Contributed services (48 percent), monetary contributions (46 percent) and equipment and supplies (40 percent) were reported more frequently received than were contributed acquisitions of buildings and land (six percent). However, the source of contributory support was well distributed: corporations (35 percent), service organizations (45 percent) and private individuals (46 percent).

Insert Table 1 about here.

Tallies of the perceived need expressed by superintendents for the four types of contributions are presented in Table 2. Contributed services were reported to be essential by 80 percent of the school district administrators responding. Monetary contributions (78 percent), equipment and supplies (76 percent) and buildings and land (60 percent) were all deemed essential philanthropic activity in regard to public school education. In contrast to Table 1, however, the corresponding receipt of these four types of contributions from the private sector were 48 percent, 46 percent, 40 percent and six percent, respectively.

Insert Table 2 about here.

A chi-square test of independence indicated monetary contributions and acquisitions of buildings and land were independent of the district administrator's perceived need for these contributions, as presented in Table 3. However, a moderate relationship was found to exist between superintendent perceived needs and contributions of equipment and supplies, and contributed services.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Results from discriminant analyses performed to predict contributory status by source of contribution and type of contribution are presented in Tables 4 and 5. The overall Wilk's lambda for the combined discriminant functions ranged between .89 and .94. These relatively

high values indicate the collective strength of the predictor variables in discriminating whether or not school districts were in receipt of these philanthropic activities. The four predictor variables used in the discriminant analyses were, in general, found to be independent of one another. This finding indicated the unique contribution made by each variable in the discriminant function analyses. One exception to this independence, however, was the moderate relationship ($r=.37$) found between expense (the average amount spent by the district to educate each child) and assets (the assessed valuation per child).

Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here.

Size of the school district as determined by number of students enrolled was a significant factor in predicting whether or not school districts received contributions from each of the three sources (corporations, service organizations and private individuals). Assets of the district, as measured by assessed valuation per pupil, were also a significant factor in predicting corporation contributions. The activity, or school district patron support of its financial obligation to education as reflected in the millage, was also a significant factor in depicting contributions from service organizations.

In type of contribution received, the size of the school district was a significant factor in depicting monetary contributions, equipment and supplies, and contributed services. School district patron activity or support, as expressed by the millage, coupled with the size factor in being significant in predicting contributions of equipment and supplies,

and services. The assets of a school district, as measured by assessed valuation per pupil, was the sole significant predictor variable in identifying contributions of buildings and land. The asset factor and the size variable were both significant discriminators of monetary contributions.

Discussion

Overall, school district administrators perceived the need for contributions from the private sector to be essential. These needs were apparently being felt to a greater degree than they are being realized.

Generally, larger districts reported the receipt of contributions more frequently than smaller districts. Furthermore, contributions of equipment and supplies and contributed services were realized to a greater extent by those districts deeming them essential. Therefore, superintendents perceiving the need for contributions of equipment and supplies and contributed services represented school districts that were more successful in acquiring these forms of private support. These districts generally had higher millage rates which may be indicative of greater community support in meeting its obligation to education.

Likewise, more philanthropic activity by service organizations was realized in districts with higher millage rates. Not unexpectedly, districts with greater average assets were more often the recipients of contributions by corporations. These corporations also account in part for the higher average school district tax base. These districts with greater average assets were also more successful in receiving monetary gifts and contributions of buildings and land.

This study presents a statewide assessment of the nature and acquisition of private resource contributions to public school education in Arkansas. Implications from the literature review and subsequent statewide results illustrate a variety of private philanthropic contributions have been acquired by public schools.

The twelve-cell source-by-type matrix presented in this study represents a delineation of philanthropic activity in public school education. Much literature is available in only a few of these source-by-type contributory activities (namely, monetary contributions from corporations, contributed services and contributions of equipment and supplies by service organizations). Of particular note in reference to this study, private support to public school education was observed in each source-by-type combination. Thus, the implication is that more needs to be done in identifying these sources and methods for getting philanthropic support from the private sector.

Private support activity of public school education has received contrasting reviews. The Council for Financial Aid to Education (1976) noted voluntary support from the private sector has failed to match the rate of inflation and growth of enrollment. A more optimistic view is presented by Doll (1979). He predicts corporate funding will eventually replace publically supported systems, since economic and social problems will leave corporations as the only viable institution to provide services such as education. School districts feeling the economic pinch of the recession might be advised and encouraged to note the success of the districts reported in this study in supplementing public resources with private contributions.

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Table 1

Percentages of School Districts Reporting
Contributions Received by Private Sources

<u>Type of Contribution</u>	<u>Source of Contributions</u>			<u>Overall</u>
	<u>Corporations</u>	<u>Service Organizations</u>	<u>Private Individuals</u>	
Monetary	22%	26%	20%	46%
Buildings and Land	2	1	4	6
Equipment and Supplies	19	25	19	40
Services	14	34	38	48
Overall	35	45	46	67

Table 2

School District Administrator Perceived Need
For Various Types of Contributions

Type of Contribution	Perceived Need		
	Very Essential	Somewhat Essential	Non- Essential
Monetary	No. 51	138	59
	Pct. (21)	(57)	(22)
Buildings and Land	No. 31	113	96
	Pct. (13)	(47)	(40)
Equipment and Supplies	No. 37	149	60
	Pct. (15)	(61)	(24)
Services	No. 64	127	49
	Pct. (27)	(53)	(20)

Table 3

Tests of Independence Contrasting
Contributions with Perceived Need

Type of Contribution	Chi-Square	Probability	Kendall's Tau-C Measure of Association
Monetary	1.69	.429	.06
Buildings and Land	.44	.802	-.01
Equipment and Supplies	9.73	.008*	.19
Services	27.72	.000*	.35

* $p < .05$

Table 4

Discriminant Analysis: Factors Predicting School District
Receipt of Private Contributions by Source

Contributing Source: Corporations	F-Value	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
Student Enrollment	23.60	.000*	.883
Assessed Valuation Per Pupil	4.90	.028*	.402
Expense Per Student	1.31	.254	-.208
Millage	.99	.321	.181
Contributory Source: Service Organizations	F-Value	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
Student Enrollment	14.56	.000*	.765
Millage	9.61	.002*	.621
Expense Per Student	2.85	.093	-.338
Assessed Valuation Per Pupil	.00	.976	-.006
Contributory Source: Private Individuals	F-Value	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
Student Enrollment	13.84	.000*	.928
Millage	2.77	.098	.415
Expense Per Student	.56	.457	-.186
Assessed Valuation Per Pupil	.04	.837	.051

*p<.05

Table 5

Discriminant Analysis: Factors Predicting School District
Receipt of Private Contributions by Type

Type of Contribution: Monetary	F-Value	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
Student Enrollment	20.53	.000*	.887
Assessed Valuation Per Pupil	6.01	.015*	.480
Millage	.63	.427	.156
Expense Per Student	.22	.642	-.091
Type of Contribution: Buildings & Land	F-Value	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
Assessed Valuation Per Pupil	9.47	.002*	.785
Expense Per Student	.96	.329	-.250
Student Enrollment	.76	.385	.222
Millage	.00	.975	-.008
Type of Contribution: Equipment & Supplies	F-Value	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
Student Enrollment	11.30	.001*	.742
Millage	6.93	.009*	.581
Expense Per Student	2.79	.096	-.369
Assessed Valuation Per Pupil	.62	.432	.174
Type of Contribution: Services	F-Value	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
Student Enrollment	11.51	.001*	.802
Millage	4.19	.042*	.484
Assessed Valuation Per Pupil	3.30	.071	.429
Expense Per Student	.28	.597	.125

*p<.05